DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 307 590 CS 009 668

AUTHOR	Koppenhave, David; Jacoby, Monica, Ed.
TITLE	Center for Early Adolescence Studies Adolescent Literacy.
INSTITUTION	North Carolina Univ., Chapel Hill. Center for Early Adolescence.
PUB DATE	86
NOTE	6p.; Best available copy.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Common Focus; v7 n1 1986
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; Art Education; Cultural Enrichment; *Illiteracy; Intensive Language Courses; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Language Experience Approach; Program Descriptions; *Reading Instruction; *Remedial Programs; *Remedial Reading
IDENTIFIERS	Education Consolidation Improvement Act Chapter 1; Learning to Read through the Arts Program

ABSTRACT

The extent and impact of adolescent illiteracy, brief descriptions of several successful programs designed to combat adolescent illiteracy, and a more detailed description of one of those programs are included in this collection of articles. The first article argues that while experts may disagree about the numbers of illiterate adolescents and the definition of literacy, no one can dispute the personal and social cost of functional illiteracy. The second article briefly describes the Kenosha (Wisconsin) Chapter I Language Experience Program, the Learning to Read through the Arts (LTRTTA) program, the Structured Teaching in the Areas of Reading and Language Arts (STAR) program, and the High Intensity Language Training (HILT) second language program. In all these programs, teachers help write the curricula, assess in-service and program needs, and select material. Program coordinators are all dynamic former teachers. The article contends that students find the classroom exciting, and that some go to great lengths to be able to participate in the programs. The third article describes the LTRTTA program in New York City in which students explore their feelings and ideas by creating art, are rewarded for doing so, and thus experience a feeling of competence which often carries over into their reading classes and into their overall academic performance. (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Rozenzweig

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Common Focus

...antexchan... ...informat... ...early ad...

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Center for Early Adolescence

Vol. 7, No. 1, 1986

ED307590

CS007668

Center for Early Adolescence Studies Adolescent Literacy

The Project on Adolescent Literacy seeks to identify solutions to an issue that is assuming increasing urgency: functional illiteracy among the junior high-aged population in the United States. This issue is urgent for several reasons.

First, when experts in fields as diverse as youth unemployment, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, and juvenile crime identify critical factors in the young people they deal with, common to all these areas of self-abuse and social destructiveness is the humiliation of reading failure. To read a driver's manual requires sixth-grade skills; understanding directions for preparing a t.v. dinner requires eighth-grade skills; deciphering instructions on an aspirin bottle requires tenth-grade skills. Functionally illiterate youngsters (often defined as reading below either fifth- or sixth-grade level) are effectively cut off from essential social and economic survival skills and are at great risk for the dreadful ensuing statistics that numb us about the age group.

Second, illiteracy plays a central role in youth unemployment. Youth employment is a critical issue that at present is addressed in later adolescence, at the point of transition from school to work. By that time many young people are already handicapped to the point of being unemployable, not having made the key transition from decoding ("learning to read") to comprehension ("reading to learn" in the content areas). They cannot read directions, memos, or manuals. Employers ask schools to send them young people who can read and communicate well. If schools are to do this, they must start their efforts to reduce youth unemployment at a key time when students make the transition to "reading to learn": in the middle grades.

Third, primary reading programs are serving many young children well, as they learn to read in grades 1-3. They do not, however, serve those pre- and young adolescents who either need continuing help or whose problems become evident only as they must progress from decoding to comprehension.

Fourth, functional illiteracy is a leading cause of the school dropout rate. Increasing numbers of young adolescents are reading below grade level and are not being promoted to high school. As school systems raise academic standards, an unintended effect will be an increased dropout rate among those students who do not progress with their peers. Middle and junior high schools, as well as after-school programs, thus need help identifying successful literacy programs.

Fifth, stepping back from young adolescents and looking at literacy statistics in general, we find that estimates of the extensiveness of literacy problems in our society vary but are huge. For instance, the Department of Defense estimates that 13 percent of 17-year-olds are "functionally illiterate." The Education Department estimates that 2.3 million people over age 16 join the ranks of the illiterate annually. This figure includes 1 million high school dropouts but excludes high school graduates with only the barest ability to read. The Department of Labor estimates that up to 75 percent of the

What Is Literacy?

That person is literate who, in a language that he speaks, can read and understand anything he would have understood if it had been spoken to him and who can write, so that it can be read, anything that he can say.

—Sara Gudschinsky, *A Manual of Literacy of Preliterate Peoples* (Ukarumpa, Papua New Guinea, Summer Institute of Linguistics), p. 5.

Literacy should enable the individual . . . to extend the range of his mental processes and gain the knowledge which makes the world around him intelligible and manageable.

—UNESCO, *Literacy as a Factor in Development* (Minedlit/3, Paris, 1965), pp. 7-8.

Literacy includes the basic skills required for survival in today's world: the ability to improve one's understanding and continue learning; to identify public services and focus on career opportunities; to participate in the community and vote intelligently; and to care for one's children and make informed decisions.

—*Report of the Greater Cleveland Communications Skills Study Group*, draft, 1985.

Project on Adolescent Literacy Advisory Board

Richard Allington
Department of Reading
SUNY at Albany
Lecture Center B30
Albany, NY 12222

Jacqueline Cook
Acting Executive Director
Literacy Assistance Center
4th Floor
15 Dutch St.
New York, NY 10038

James W. Cunningham
Associate Professor
School of Education
307B Peabody Hall
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Mary Beth Curtis
Associate Director
Harvard Reading Laboratory
Graduate School of Education
206 Larsen Hall
Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138

Michael Graves
Professor of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55417

William S. Hall
Professor
Department of Psychology
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742

Jerome C. Harste
Professor
Indiana University
School of Education
3rd and Jordan
Bloomington, IN 47405

Reynaldo F. Macias
Department of Education
University of Southern California
P.O. Box 77963
Los Angeles, CA 90007

Linda Meyer
Center for the Study of Reading
University of Illinois
Champaign-Urbana, IL 61801

Victoria Risko
Peabody Center for Effective Teaching
Peabody College
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, TN 37240

Charlene Rivera
Research Consultant
Development Associates
2924 Columbia Pike
Arlington, VA 22204

Nancy Rogers-Zegarra
Assistant Principal
Park Road Elementary School
Collinswood School
3701 Haven Drive
Charlotte, NC 28209

Center Studies Adolescent Literacy

continued from p. 1

8 million unemployed in 1982 lacked the literacy skills prerequisite for on-the-job training.[1] That those in the "least competent" group of readers come from families at or under the poverty level and are predominantly black and Hispanic comes as no surprise. As *Foundation News* points out, illiteracy, dependency, and deprivation are highly correlated. Inadequate reading and writing skills are reported for 85 percent of adjudicated juveniles and 90 percent of mothers on AFDC.[2]

Perhaps more accurate than these global estimates, however, are estimates of illiteracy limited by specific geographical boundaries. The Greater Cleveland Communications Skills Study Group reports that in the Cleveland Public Schools, according to the schools' own data, nearly half the students who begin ninth grade do not finish high school. "Low basic literacy achievement is a prime cause of the problem. The number of school dropouts and unskilled graduates in Cuyahoga County increases by over five thousand each year." A startling result is that "over 26 percent of Cuyahoga County high school graduates and 51 percent of Cleveland graduates who enter state-supported colleges and universities sit in remedial English classes" (the figure is 15 percent for the rest of the state of Ohio). The Study Group estimates the cost of illiteracy to Cuyahoga County at $2 billion annually "in lost productivity, welfare payments, delinquency and more serious crimes, unrealized tax revenues, and remedial training programs."[3] Using these criteria, they estimate the national cost to be approaching $225 billion annually.

Experts may argue about numbers and definitions. No one disputes the personal and social cost of functional illiteracy.

[1]Thomas Toch, "America's Quest for Universal Literacy," *Education Week*, 6 Sept., 1984, pp. 13-15.

[2]Roger Williams, "Illiterate, Who, Us?" *Foundation News*, 24 (1983), pp. 12-15.

[3]The source of this information is at present confidential.

Effective Programs Combat Adolescent Illiteracy

by David Koppenhaver

There is nothing more exciting to a kindergarten kid than a blank sheet of paper, and nothing more frightening to a junior high kid.

—Tom Zuhlke, coordinator
Kenosha (WI) Chapter I Language Experience

Johnny can't read, write, or think critically. The issue of adolescent illiteracy has been well-documented by the popular press. The dead horse has been beaten almost back to life in barber shops, boutiques, and backyards.

Rather than delight the doom-sayers, or risk bumping someone off the burgeoning bandwagon, I'd like to share some preliminary observations from site visits to four literacy programs. These programs exhibit four common areas of strength: respect for teachers, administrators who facilitate success, students who know they are learning, and meaningful curricula that take into account the interests, needs, language, and experience of each student. The four programs are a trio of Chapter I programs—Kenosha Chapter I Language Experience in Wisconsin, Learning to Read Through the Arts (LTRTTA), and Structured Teaching in the Areas of Reading and Language Arts (STAR) in New York City—and a second language model, the High Intensity Language Training (HILT) program of El Paso, Texas.

The respect given to teachers is perhaps the most striking feature of these programs. Teachers help write the curricula, assess in-service and program needs, and select materials. HILT, LTRTTA, and Chapter I Language Experience keep looseleaf curriculum guides, which are filled with teacher-made lessons and updated formally by teacher committees each year. The teachers in all four programs are asked to present the methods and lessons they have found successful to other teachers in the programs and in the school at large. The programs build success by showing the teachers how to teach reading as a meaning-based activity, writing as a process, oral development as a foundation, and student involvement as the rule. Then they allow teachers to personalize the idea with their own interests and their knowledge of student needs. For example, Lynn Rutter (Kenosha Chapter I) teaches social studies within a language arts framework.

Teachers seem to thrive in such an atmosphere, often going far beyond the bounds of job requirements. Judy Meyer (HILT) regularly takes groups of students with her to the public library on her own time. Rutter gives door prizes (household goods, canned goods) to parents who come to parent-teacher meetings or special events for her students.

The role of the administrators in these programs is as facilitator. At LTRTTA, Chapter I Language Experience, STAR, and HILT there are dynamic coordinators, *all* of whom started as teachers. These individuals are integral in setting up and participating in regular in-service activities, which include teacher idea-sharing. Politically savvy, they are careful to sell the program to outsiders. Chapter I Language Experience displays student-made books in the central administration building. HILT always includes students in get-togethers with principals and administrators. LTRTTA has made P.S. 9 look like an art gallery; student work is displayed everywhere.

These coordinators know how to ensure success. By creating a climate of acceptance—even admiration—among peripheral personnel and the public while training teachers and giving them a personal stake in the program, they become stronger than their weakest link; many chains instead of just one pull the program.

Students in these programs were remarkably well-behaved, thought being in the program was a lot better than any of their other classes, knew they were safe, and knew they were learning. Almecca, a fifth grader at STAR, commented that STAR was much better than being in the regular reading lab, where "all they do is fill in worksheets." Here she learned words like "gaunt" and "obese" (she did learn them; I asked her to explain them to me), and when she talked to friends, she could "sound like an eighth grader." Laura, a sixth grader at HILT, liked being able to talk to her teacher "like a friend." Ernan, an eighth grader at Chapter I Language Experience, said all his friends wanted to come with him to class, because then they could go on field trips and make their own books. The four programs provide such different academic fare than students are used to digesting, that most of the students look forward to coming, rather than feeling the stigma usually attached to pullout programs.

The curriculum in each of these programs is meaningful and includes each student. From the students' interests or experience, language is generated. Reading and writing activities are built on the student's language. At LTRTTA all the reading lessons stem from the art experience, at Kenosha from the language experience approach. STAR teaches students strategies, so that they can cope with text independently. HILT students use pictures and soundless videos. Always there is an experience, a motivation for producing first oral language and then a reading or writing follow-up.

Basal texts, if used at all; are only starting points rather than a Bible to be held sacrosanct and worshipped sequenti-

---

Editor's note: The programs described in this article are presented in greater detail in the following pages. The program descriptions, written by Rosalyn Rossignol, are drawn from reports prepared by Project on Adolescent Literacy staff members following their visits to the programs.

Center for Early Adolescence
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Suite 223, Carr Mill Mall
Carrboro, NC 27510
(919) 966-1148

Common Focus is published by the Center for Early Adolescence. Copies available free upon request. Monica Jacoby, editor.

Activities of the Center for Early Adolescence are supported by grants from the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, Lilly Endowment, Inc., and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

Literacy Programs Benefit Students

continued from p. 2

ally from beginning to end. The teachers in these programs have borrowed good ideas from each other, from magazines and journals, from texts and resource guides, and they have adapted them to a program philosophy and the particular needs of their students.

Although these programs have had considerable success, they are not without their share of problems, both educational and social. Educationally, teachers are often hampered by too many students and too little time to plan for them. Individual and small group work suffers. These programs are concerned that the standardized tests they are required to give do not adequately measure their program's real achievements.

Socially, they all are seeing increased need and decreasing funding. Parent support has been hard to garner. In some cases, parents are struggling with survival issues that make academic concerns seem like a luxury item. Many of the children in these programs are incredibly mobile. An elementary school of 400 students in Kenosha had 109 transfers in the first month of school.

These are four programs that make a difference in the education and lives of students most in need of good instruction and stability. They succeed with populations where others have traditionally failed. Their classrooms are exciting enough that a student will take public transportation alone across New York City to the instructional site when his classroom teacher, for disciplinary reasons, forbids him to ride the school bus to the program. The programs achieve enough success that a family will proudly offer their son's language experience story, the only book in the house, to visitors to read when they enter the home. In treating teachers like professionals, the programs inspire them to work harder and enable them to enjoy their classes more than in the average public school classroom. The programs exhibit many of the best practices of the best teachers in the best schools. They are not fodder for the what's-wrong-with-public-education crowd; instead, they can be exemplified as models of what might be done to educate those most in need of good instruction.

Resources

Becoming A Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading, by Richard C. Anderson et al., discusses the present state of the teaching of reading in the United States. The authors describe the complex problems facing educators and make recommendations for school improvement. Available from: National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20208.

Breaking Ground: Teachers Relate Reading and Writing in the Elementary School, by Jane Hansen et al., is a compendium of articles on reading and writing connections in the classroom. It is a good hands-on tool for individuals or programs. Available from: Heinemann Educational Books Inc., 70 Court St., Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03801.

Essays Into Literacy, by Frank Smith, is enjoyable to read, and soundly based in research and practice. Many of the people we spoke to in good adolescent literacy programs cited the author as a major influence on their work. Available from: Heinemann Educational Books Inc., 70 Court St., Portsmouth, NH 03801.

Language Learning, is a special issue of *Educational Leadership,* Volume 38, Number 6, March 1981. The issue is devoted to the full gamut of language development that teachers and schools must address, from language and the brain to administrative policy and teacher training. Available from: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 225 N. Washington St., Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

Developing Readers and Writers in the Content Areas, by David W. Moore et al., is a practical guide for middle and secondary school teachers. The authors suggest reading and writing strategies and instructional techniques that facilitate student learning of content. The latter half of the book provides overviews of how the strategies might be implemented in a variety of content areas and grade levels. Available from: Longman Inc., 95 Church St., White Plains, New York 10601.

The Read-Aloud Handbook, by Jim Trelease, is a how-to book on reading aloud to young people, from birth through adolescence. It includes a detailed guide to more than 300 suggested books. Available from: Penguin Books, 625 Madison Ave., New York, New York 10022.

Chapter One Program
Learning to Read through the Arts

P.S. 9
100 W. 84th Street
New York, New York

Philosophy and Program Description

Learning to Read through the Arts (LTRTTA), a Chapter One program that originated in New York City, provides students with concrete art experiences that they can translate into reading skills. Students come from their regular schools to the program two days a week. At P.S. 9, where we observed the program, they attend two art workshops and one reading workshop per day. All art workshops—dance, filmmaking, photography, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, painting and mixed media—are reading-oriented. Students must listen carefully to instructions, talk about what they are going to do, and record information, directions, and descriptive paragraphs about each project in their individual journals. The art experience helps students to move from the concrete to the abstract, from looking and doing to thinking about and conceptualizing. Students also frequently take field trips to various museums and performances in the metropolitan New York City area. As with the art projects, these trips are used as a basis for language development.

Lack of background knowledge is only one of the obstacles to learning that the teaching methodology of LTRTTA helps to surmount. Linking art to reading piques student interest. The program's emphasis on creativity gives students a positive feeling about learning, and provides them with opportunities to experience success in the area of academic achievement as well as that of self-expression. Further, the program sponsors an annual festival which gives students the opportunity to display their work and perform for the public.

Innovative Instruction

Reading instruction is teacher-directed, of the stand-up lecture variety. Pre-reading includes vocabulary development and some discussion of what the story is about. Reading may be silent or aloud with teacher participation. Follow-up activities include discussion of the main idea, character motivation, and writing a summary (in the students' own words) of what the story is about. Students are often asked to compare their own lives and experiences to those of the characters about whom they have read. For example, students might read a story about someone who becomes invisible. A follow-up writing activity could ask students to describe what they would do if they were invisible. Reading is usually organized around a theme, such as fantasy, and frequently correlated with an art activity. As part of a unit on fantasy, teachers started with Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, reading it and showing students the illustrations. They asked students to suggest why the creatures in the book are appealing instead of frightening. Then in mixed media art classes, students made their own fantasy creatures out of papier mache. The materials used for reading class are selections from "real" literature, both popular *(Star Wars)* and classic *(20,000 Leagues under the Sea)*. Skill practice sheets are teacher-made and related to the texts.

Teachers who participate in the program have one day per month of in-service, the goal of which is to keep people in touch with new developments in theory and methodology, and thereby keep the program from becoming too insular. In-service is also a time for sharing ideas and talking about different approaches to the same problem. For art and reading teachers just coming into the program workshops focus specifically on the methodology of the program, i.e. correlating reading and art instruction. The project coordinator, assistant coordinators, head teachers, and teacher trainers arrange all workshops and staff development programs.

Developmental Responsiveness

The instructional program of LTRTTA seems to offer wide diversity for young adolescents. On the most obvious level, students have the chance to develop their language skills in art workshops as well as reading classes. Both art and reading teachers attempt to develop students' proficiency in four language modes: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. They teach skills in context, as an integral part of reading instruction. Through field trips as well as art, they help students build a reservoir of background knowledge that helps them become better readers.

The relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere of the classrooms at P.S. 9 seem to encourage almost 100 percent participation. Young adolescents' need to be physically active is likewise accommodated by this relaxed classroom atmosphere. Students are allowed to get up and stretch or walk around the room if they need to.

In the LTRTTA program, competence, self-exploration, and creativity intersect like the three sides of a triangle. Students explore their feelings and ideas by creating art, are rewarded for doing so, and thus experience a feeling of competence which often carries over into their reading classes and, ideally, into their overall academic performance. The art workshops also provide a basis for social interaction as students obey the natural impulse to investigate and comment on one another's aims, progress, and achievement.